

EO 12958 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs  
EO 12958 3.3(b)(6)>25Yrs  
EO 12958 6.2(c)

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~OXCAPT~~

CONTROL NO. BYE #0094-66, Copy #12  
w/att B only

REFERRED TO OFFICE	RECEIVED			RELEASED		SEEN BY	
	SIGNATURE	DATE	TIME	DATE	TIME	NAME & OFFICE SYMBOL	DATE
ExDir/Comptroller <i>ER</i>		5/2					5/2

(OVER)

Handle Via Indicated Controls

**BYEMAN**

Access to this document will be restricted to those persons  
cleared for the specific projects;

.....  
.....

**WARNING**

This document contains information affecting the national security of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws U. S. Code Title 18, Sections 793 and 794. The law prohibits its transmission or the revelation of its contents in any manner to an unauthorized person, as well as its use in any manner prejudicial to the safety or interest of the United States or for the benefit of any foreign government to the detriment of the United States. It is to be seen only by personnel especially indoctrinated and authorized to receive information in the designated control channels. Its security must be maintained in accordance with regulations pertaining to BYEMAN Control System.

~~TOP SECRET~~

29 APR 1966

GROUP 1  
Excluded from automatic  
downgrading and declassification

~~TOP SECRET~~  
~~TOP SECRET~~

THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

EO 12958 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs  
EO 12958 3.3(b)(6)>25Yrs  
EO 12958 6.2(c)

29 April 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: OXCART Deployment Proposal

1. I want to invite your attention to the critical need for adequate intelligence in order to detect a possible Chinese Communist strategic buildup in South China and North Vietnam which might lead to their direct involvement in the Vietnam war. I consider foreknowledge of any Chinese intent to intervene in the Vietnam war to be so vital to the national interest that the full collection resources available to the United States Government should be committed to the acquisition of intelligence in this connection.

2. The collection of intelligence to give early warning of possible Chinese Communist intervention in the Vietnam war has been assigned highest priority by the Intelligence Community. It is my conviction, shared by the United States Intelligence Board, that high resolution overhead photography is essential to obtain such intelligence. The Joint Chiefs of Staff likewise are on record that every means be exploited as a matter of highest priority to obtain high resolution photographic coverage of ground force installations, major complexes, and key lines of communication in the South China and North Vietnam areas. The collection task involves adequate initial coverage and subsequent periodic coverage of ☐ heavily defended targets in North Vietnam and ☐ targets in South China. Present coverage is inadequate both as to extent and timeliness.

3. Currently, satellite photographic missions are being programmed to achieve the maximum coverage of key targets in South China and North Vietnam. However, because of design characteristics of the vehicle and weather conditions in the

BYE #0094-66  
Copy 12

APPROVED FOR RELEASE  
DATE: AUG 2007

~~TOP SECRET~~

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN  
CONTROL SYSTEM ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~

BYE #0094-66

area, satellite photography has only a very limited capability to provide the desired intelligence. In South China, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

the survivability of this aircraft against strengthened Chinese air defense facilities is becoming increasingly doubtful. Heavy concentrations of air defenses have rendered many of the highest priority target areas in North Vietnam relatively inaccessible to U-2's. Drone missions into this area have provided some coverage, but the reliability of continued coverage is uncertain. I am of the firm belief, therefore, that we cannot rely on the presently committed collection assets to provide the timely data base line and the subsequent periodic coverage we need to determine change.

4. In December 1965 the OXCART aircraft and systems, including countermeasure defensive systems, were deemed operationally ready. This is the most advanced capability for collecting high resolution photography available to the U.S. Government. It is judged to be virtually immune to air defenses in the South China and North Vietnam areas. It is ready for action and I believe it should be committed to help fill this urgent intelligence need. The OXCART can be deployed to a base in Okinawa and be ready for operational missions approximately three weeks from go-ahead.

5. An obstacle to achieving agreement to commit the OXCART vehicle has been the belief that such a step might be misinterpreted by the Chinese Communists as preparation by the U.S. for aggressive moves against China. The United States Intelligence Community and I do not share this belief. It is my view that the Chinese probably would soon come to regard the OXCART as another stage in a continuing U.S. collection program, and that they would not be led to take any drastic new military action unless there were other simultaneous U.S. overt actions which could be interpreted by them as an intent to attack China. Barring the loss of an OXCART aircraft over Chinese territory, I would not expect the Chinese to react in a way as to significantly affect U.S. national interests. We have also assessed probable reactions of other countries to the use of OXCART and I am attaching a Special National Intelligence Estimate on this overall subject.

~~TOP SECRET~~

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN  
CONTROL SYSTEM ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~

BYE #0094-66

EO 12958 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs  
(N)

6. From the standpoint of the urgency of the intelligence requirement, I would prefer to recommend to you that the OXCART vehicle be committed as soon as possible for operational missions over both South China and North Vietnam. I am presently proposing, however, immediate use of OXCART principally over North Vietnam with but minor penetration of South China. I am doing this because the [ ] U-2's still offer some prospect of adequate coverage in the South China area and I believe it prudent to assure that this capability cannot fulfill the requirement before recommending full commitment of the OXCART in this politically sensitive area. In the event [ ] U-2, together with satellite photography, proves incapable of fulfilling the requirement, I would expect to recommend to you the full operational commitment of the OXCART over South China.

7. A factor which significantly affects the collection of overhead photography in South China and North Vietnam is the weather. The climate in this area deteriorates sharply in the summer months from June through August. This condition limits the capability of all overhead reconnaissance assets. At the same time, however, it points up the need for a relatively invulnerable, reliable, quick reaction capability, such as OXCART, to maximize the exploitation of decreasing opportunities for photographic coverage during the summer months.

8. In summary, then, I am recommending to you:

a. That the OXCART vehicle be deployed immediately to Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa.

b. That the OXCART vehicle be used as soon as possible following deployment for photographic coverage of highest priority intelligence targets in North Vietnam.

c. That the OXCART vehicle be held in readiness for backup photographic coverage of China should [ ] missions

~~TOP SECRET~~

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN  
CONTROL SYSTEM ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~

BYE #0094-66

prove incapable of fulfilling the intelligence requirements.

9. I am attaching additional data to support the conclusions and recommendations above.



W. F. Raborn  
Director of Central Intelligence

Attachments:

- A. SNIE #10-2-66: "Reactions to Certain US Courses of Action"
- B. Briefing Book: "OXCART Deployment Proposal"

~~TOP SECRET~~

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN  
CONTROL SYSTEM ONLY

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN  
CONTROL SYSTEM ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~

BYE #0094-66

Distribution:

- Copy 1 - The President w/att A, cy 49 & att B, cy 1  
2 - Secretary McNamara w/att A, cy 48; att B, cy 2  
3 - Secretary Vance w/att A, cy 50; att B, cy 3  
4 - Secretary Rusk w/att A, cy 51; att B, cy 4  
5 - Mr. Rostow w/att A, cy 52; att B, cy 5  
6 - Mr. Bundy w/att A, cy 53; att B, cy 6  
7 - Mr. Coyne w/att A, cy 54; att B, cy 7  
8 - Director, DIA w/att A, cy 55; att B, cy 8  
9 - Director, NRO w/att A, cy 56; att B, cy 9  
10 - DCI w/att A, cy 57; att B, cy 10  
11 - DDCI w/att B, cy 11  
12 - ExDir/Compt w/att B, cy 12  
13 - D/DCI/NIPE w/att B, cy 13  
14 - 15 - COMOR w/atts B, cys 14 & 15  
16 - 17 - D/Recce/CIA w/atts B, cys 16 & 17  
18 - C/BNE w/att B, cy 18  
19 - DD/P w/att B, cy 19  
20 - D/OSA w/att B, cy 20  
21 - DD/I w/att B, cy 21  
22 - DD/S&T w/att B, cy 22  
23, 24, 25 - DDS&T Registry w/atts B, cys 23, 24, 25

Note: Attachment A = BYE #44001-66, SNIE 10-2-66: "Reactions to  
Certain US Courses of Action"

Attachment B = BYE #0095-66, Briefing Book: "OXCART  
Deployment Proposal"

~~TOP SECRET~~

HANDLE VIA BYEMAN  
CONTROL SYSTEM ONLY



~~TOP SECRET~~

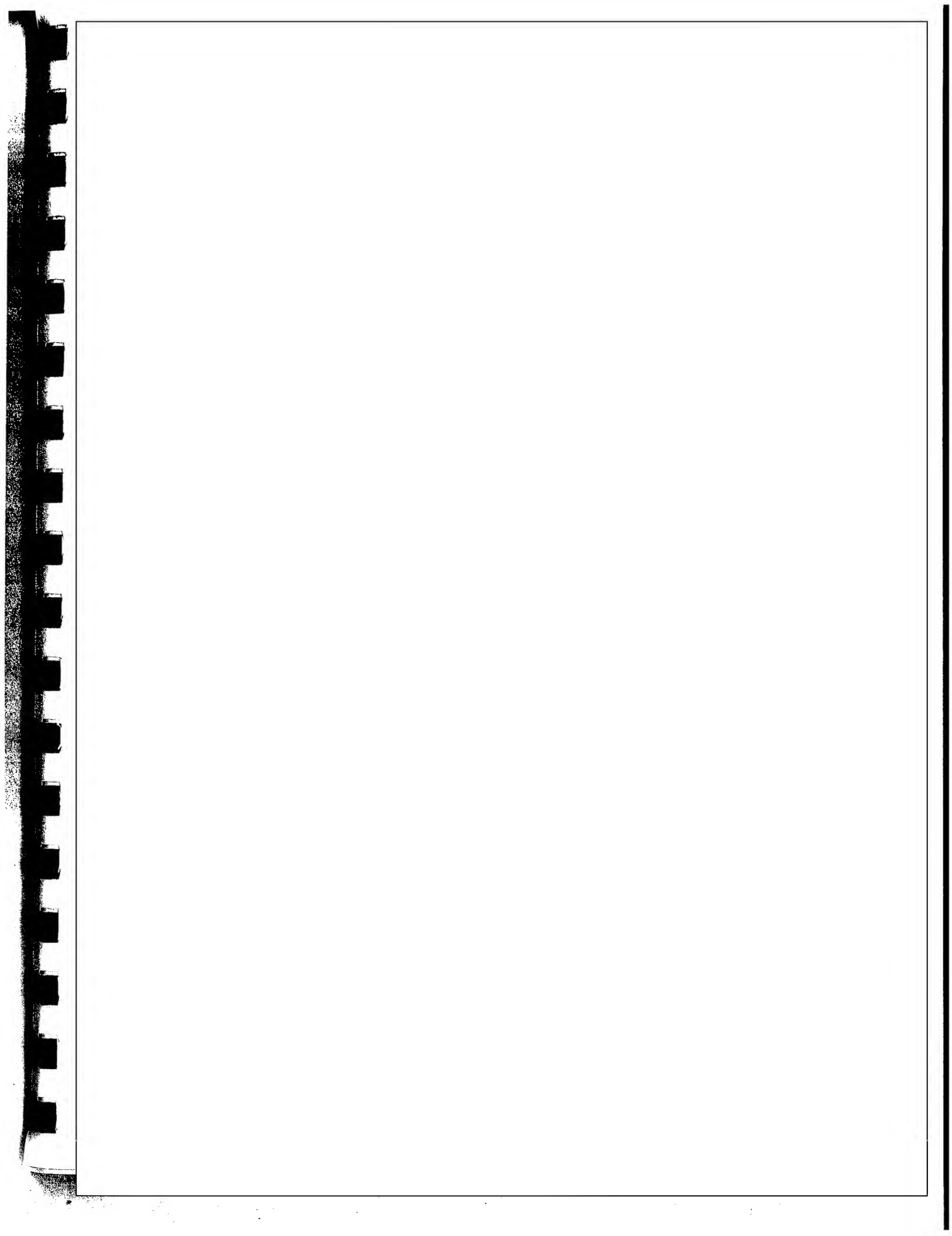
BYE 1095-66  
COPY 120P

# OX CART Deployment Proposal

~~TOP SECRET~~

Handle Via

BYEMAN TALENT - KEYHOLE COMINT  
Controls Jointly





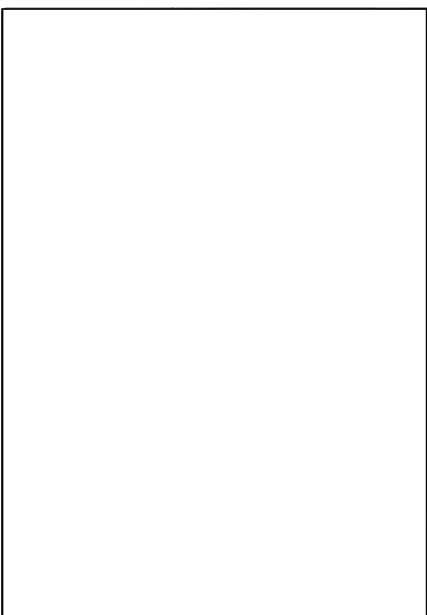
I. There is a critical need for adequate intelligence to detect possible Chinese Communist strategic buildup in South China and North Vietnam which might lead to their direct involvement in the Vietnam war.

A. In order to obtain this intelligence we must acquire coverage on targets in South China and North Vietnam, chiefly ground force installations, major complexes and key lines of communication. In all, there are  targets,  in South China and  in North Vietnam on which we need a data base and thereafter selective periodic surveillance coverage. (The highest priority area for coverage is shaded in red on the accompanying maps.)

II. What resources are we now committing to this collection effort?

A. Clandestine assets cannot be counted on to provide us the essential basic information. We must rely primarily on communications intelligence, and on reconnaissance photography.

B.

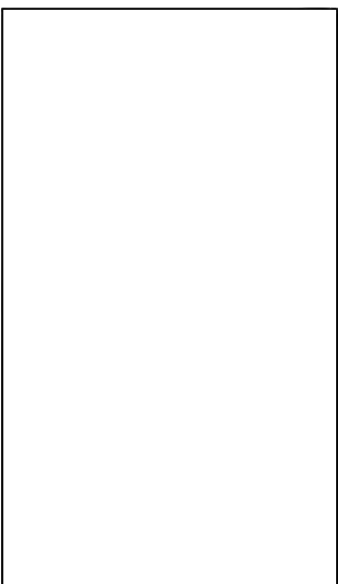


~~TOP SECRET~~ OXSART IDEALIST

III. Our present photographic reconnaissance effort is good, but not as good as it could be.

A. As you know, baseline coverage lies at the heart of all photographic intelligence. By photographing all key areas within a given time frame, we can establish a point of departure for spotting possibly significant changes at a future time in the same areas. To date our baseline coverage is by no means complete for South China. What we do have is spotty in terms of detail and resolution. For example we may know that a particular military base is operational, but we may not be able to discern what equipment is parked around the area.

1.



~~TOP SECRET ONSART IDEALIST~~

B. There are now four high altitude, high resolution reconnaissance programs providing photography of South China and North Vietnam. In addition, tactical low altitude reconnaissance missions also cover North Vietnamese targets on pre- and post-strike sorties. These five programs have provided coverage of some of the [ ] strategic targets. A portion of this coverage has proved to be of sufficient quality to provide base line data and, in some cases, the periodic surveillance coverage which we seek.

1. [ ]
2. The U-2 aircraft system, operated by SAC under the program codename TROJAN HORSE, is used primarily over North Vietnam and is not authorized to operate over China proper, although it occasionally obtains some oblique coverage of South China from across the border.

3. The BLUE SPRINGS program is carried out by drone photographic aircraft, operating over portions of South China but primarily over North Vietnam.

4. The KH-7 program is our high resolution satellite reconnaissance system.

IV. Despite their excellence, all of these systems are limited.

A. The tactical jets and the drones are vulnerable in varying degrees not only to enemy fighters but also to both conventional AAA and to SAMs.

B. The U-2s can be downed by SAMs and, under some circumstances, by MIG-21s.

C. While the satellites are not vulnerable to enemy attack, their success depends largely on weather. They cannot seek out breaks in cloud cover; our capability to adjust their flight paths is limited.

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~NOX~~ ~~SART~~ IDEALIST

D. Let me summarize our experience with the four basic programs from October 1, 1965 to April 23, 1966.

1. During this period a total of 87 missions were flown. These missions obtained base line coverage of [ ] of our priority targets, [ ] in South China and [ ] in North Vietnam. During this same period we also achieved periodic surveillance of a third of these targets. Thus in nearly seven months we have acquired base line data on less than half of our priority objectives and have accomplished little periodic surveillance.

2. From this experience I conclude that the reconnaissance tasks which we need to accomplish in South China and North Vietnam are unlikely to be achieved successfully if we must continue to rely solely on the assets which we are currently using.

V. Adding the OXCART to the existing combination of systems would give us undeniable advantages.

A. The OXCART, like the satellites, is virtually invulnerable to fighters and surface-to-air missiles. It can cover high-priority targets now denied to U-2s and tactical photo reconnaissance aircraft.

B. Unlike the satellites, OXCART can program coverage when there are sudden openings during periods of sustained bad weather—and weather is a prime consideration in South China and North Vietnam.

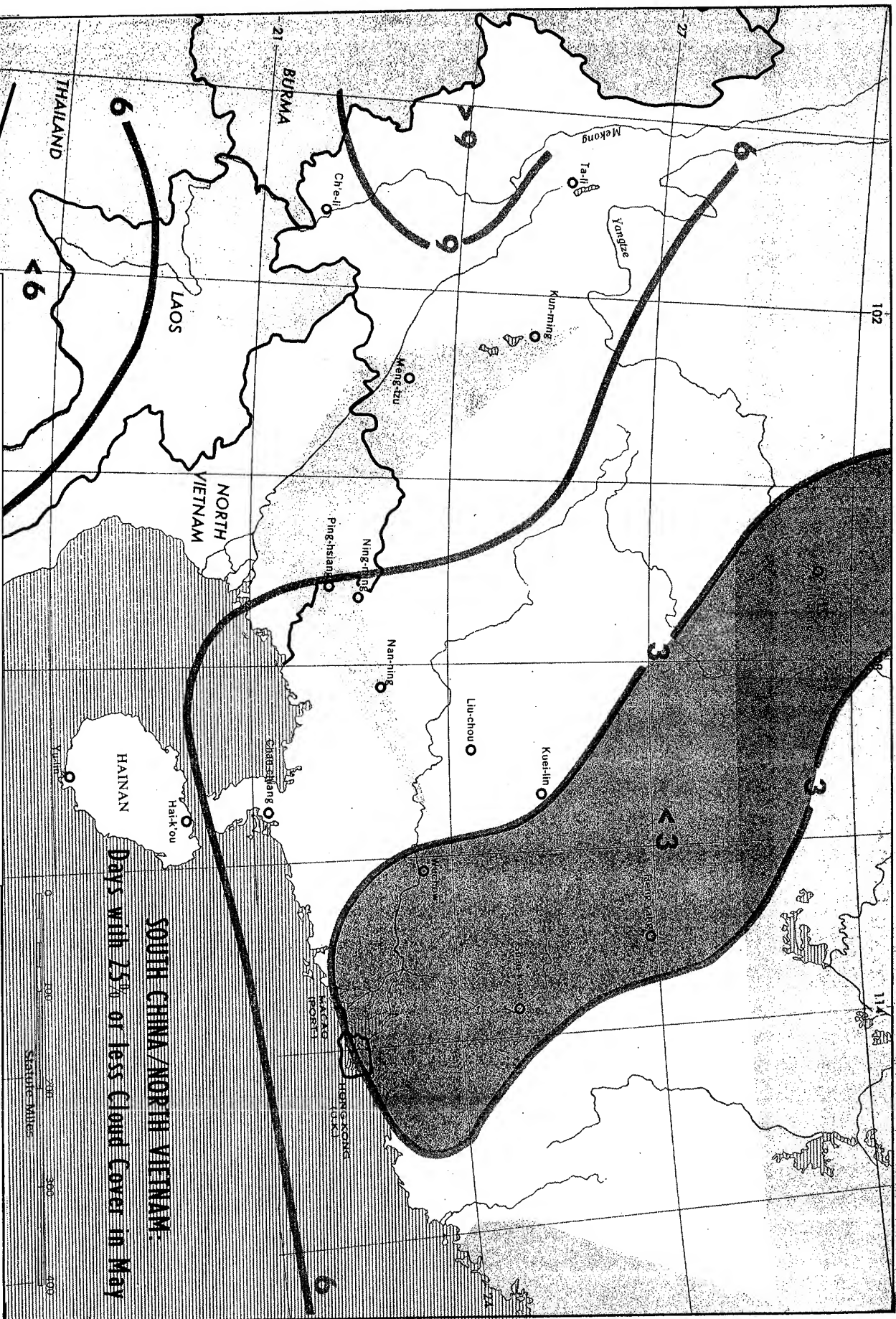
C. It is bad now, and will be particularly bad from June through September.

~~TOP SECRET OXCART IDEALIST/~~

D. This map shows the number of days in May when the weatherman predicts days with 25 percent or less cloud cover, in various areas of China and Vietnam. The grey tone shows the area where there will be three days or less in the course of the month.

~~TOP SECRET OXGART IDEALIST~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

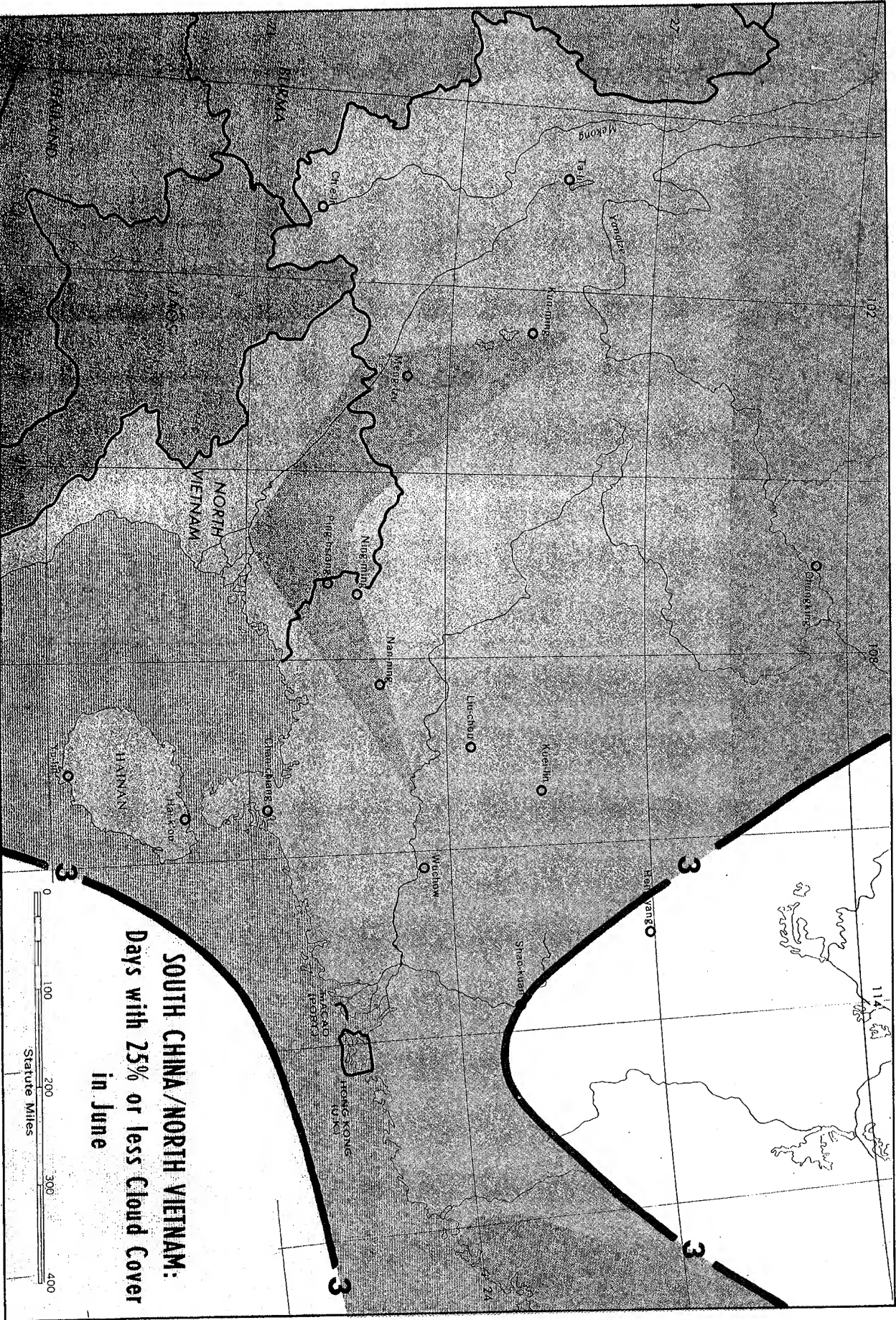


In June, with the onset of the monsoon, the entire area promises less than three days of weather suitable for photography.

~~TOP SECRET OXCART~~ IDEALIST



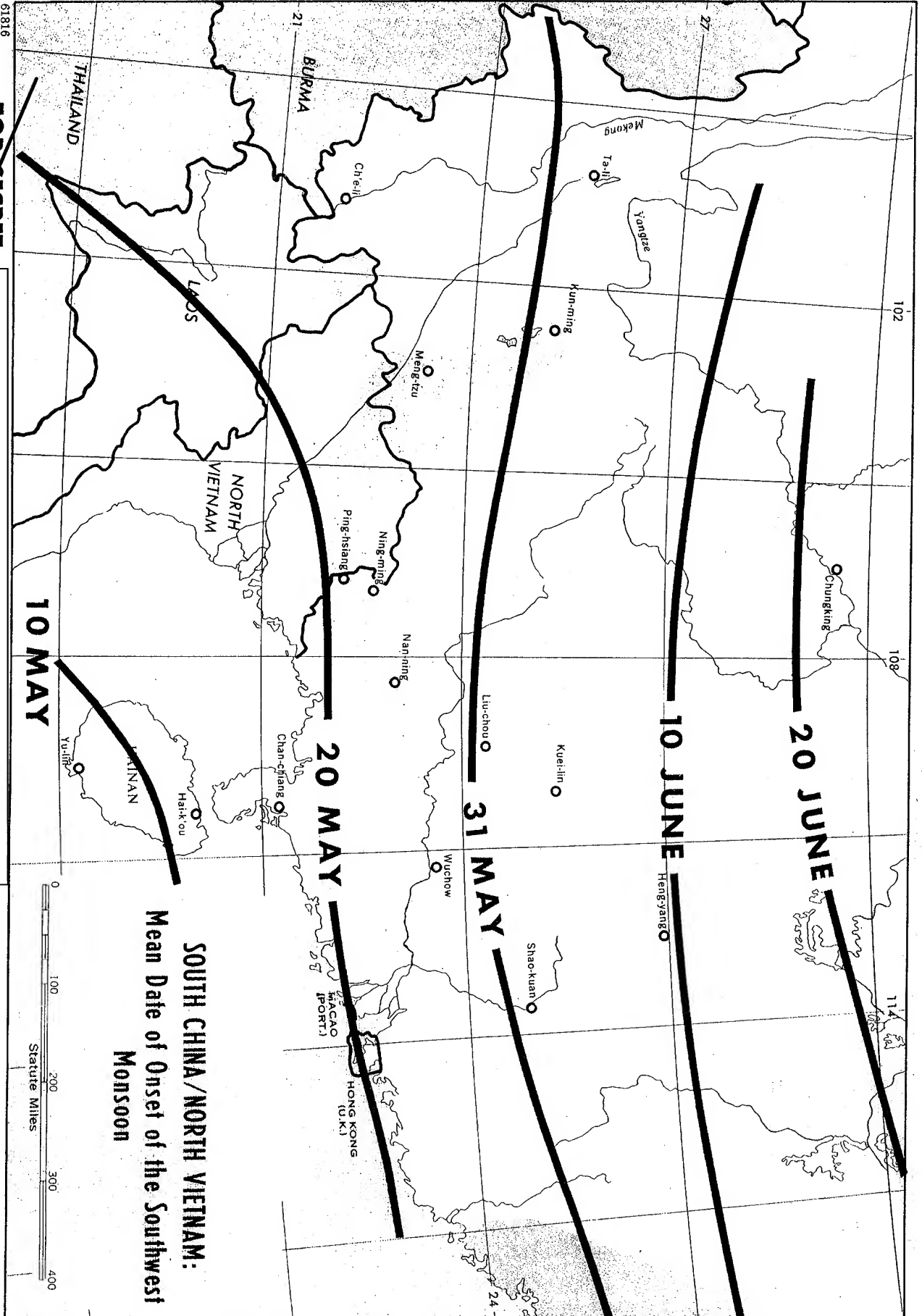
~~TOP SECRET~~





E. This map shows the approximate time when the oncoming southwest monsoon can be expected to preclude most possibilities of photography over the various areas. From June through September, there will be a little good reconnaissance weather in the area.

~~TOP SECRET~~ OXCART IDEALIST



**SOUTH CHINA/NORTH VIETNAM:**  
**Mean Date of Onset of the Southwest Monsoon**

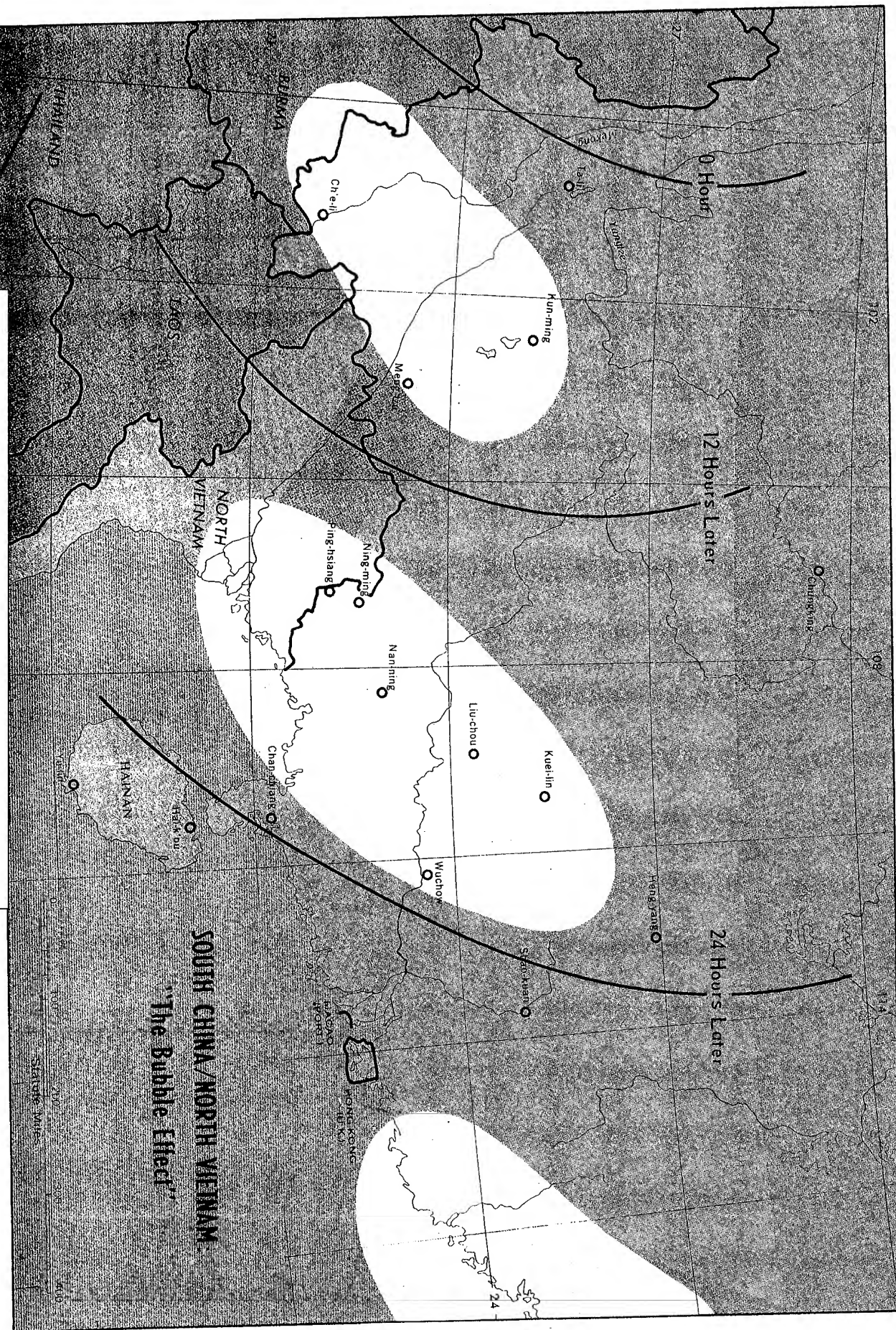
61816  
**TOP SECRET**

F. There may be one or two days a month, however, when a large hole or "bubble" will open in the overcast and permit photography. These "bubbles" are relatively predictable to the weathermen, and this picture shows a hypothetical bubble, at 12-hour intervals, as it is blown across China from west to east.

1. In past years we have been able to anticipate these peepholes and exploit them with a U-2. The reconnaissance satellites, with their predetermined orbits, cannot be programmed to take advantage of these bubbles. A manned aircraft is the only vehicle that can use these openings to gather some data—base data and changes from the base—on the Chinese military posture.

TOP SECRET ~~OX~~CART IDEALIST

TOP SECRET



VI. In short, we are facing a period of over four months when our potential enemy will have an important ally on his side--the weather. This weather screen will retard our collection of knowledge on his homeland. There may be enough good weather days, however, to let us cover most of the targets we need for our photographic base if we augment present assets with a reliable quick-reaction capability that can exploit limited weather openings.

~~TOP SECRET NOXCART IDEALIST~~

VII. The quick reaction reconnaissance asset that could do much to help us is the OXCART, shown in this photograph.

A. This is an aircraft that can fly over denied areas at more than three times the speed of sound, and at altitudes in excess of 84,000 feet.

1. It has demonstrated that it can provide high-resolution photography of a swath 50 miles wide.

B. There are three of these aircraft ready to go, manned by qualified civilian pilots, under CIA control.

~~TOP SECRET OXCART IDEALIST~~

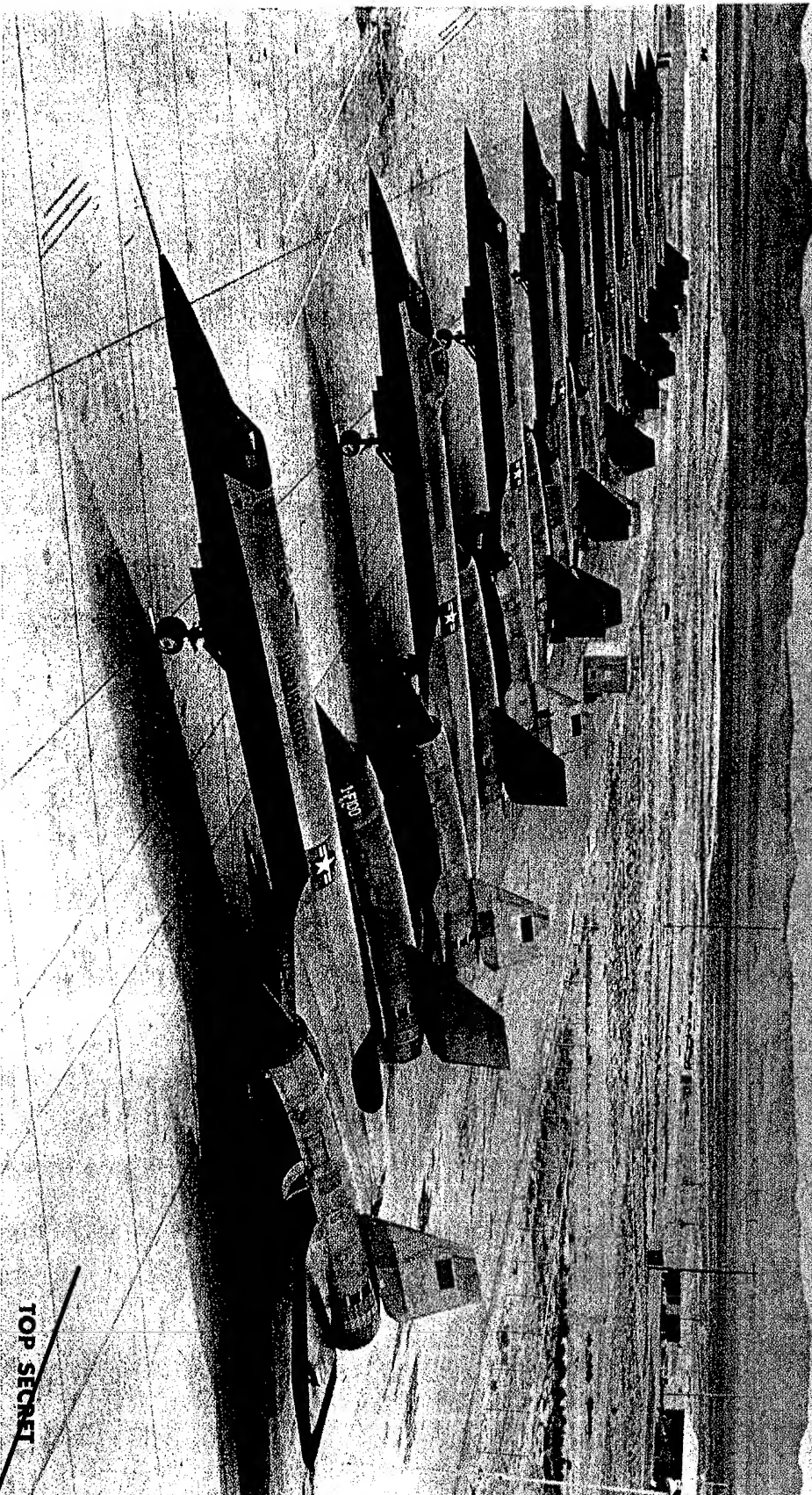


# OXCAR AIRCRAFT

Speed ..... Mach 3.1 1860 Knots

Range .....  w/o Inflight Refueling

Altitude ..... 84,000 Ft. Plus



TOP SECRET

C. We have pre-positioned 27 support personnel and a million pounds of equipment at Kadena.

D. The operational, housing and messing facilities are ready. Shop equipment, spare parts, motor vehicles, and POL supplies are in place.

~~TOP SECRET OXSAFT IDEALIST/~~





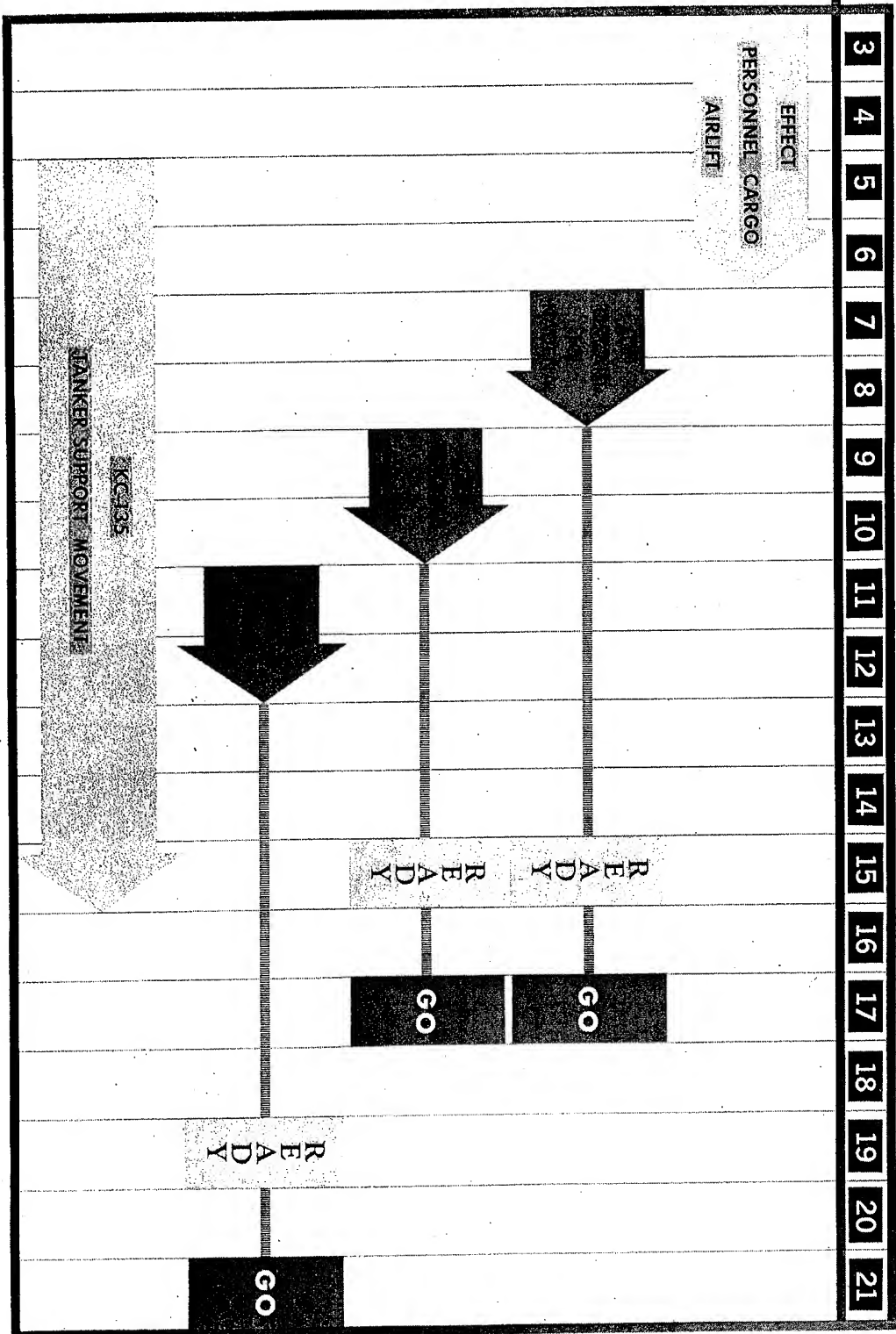
E. This chart shows the time required to begin operations after the authority is given to proceed. We estimate that on authorization to use the OXCART, the aircraft could begin operations over target areas in about 3 weeks.

TOP SECRET OXCART IDEALIST

# DEPLOYMENT SCHEDULE

~~TOP SECRET~~

DAYS FROM  
"GO AHEAD"



DEPLOYMENT ACTIONS

F. Here is a sample flight path for the OXCART, restricted to North Vietnamese territory. This one covers ☐ critical targets in ☐ over the denied area.

~~TOP SECRET~~ OXCART IDEALIST



1. With a minor penetration of South China, a flight track could cover [ ] targets in just [ ] over North Vietnam and [ ] over South China.

~~TOP SECRET-OSCAR IDEALIST~~



X. It is my recommendation that, as a first step, OXCART be deployed to Kadena, and that it be employed to acquire photography of North Vietnam.

A. A favorable decision on this recommendation now or in the near future will give us an opportunity to acquire experience in operational use of the aircraft, and to test Chinese Communist reaction to its presence in the theater.

B. If, as now appears likely, the U-2 program will not succeed in acquiring the necessary coverage of the targets within South China, a further recommendation will be submitted concerning the use of OXCART in that area.

C. I believe that the need to proceed with OXCART is clear and demonstrable.

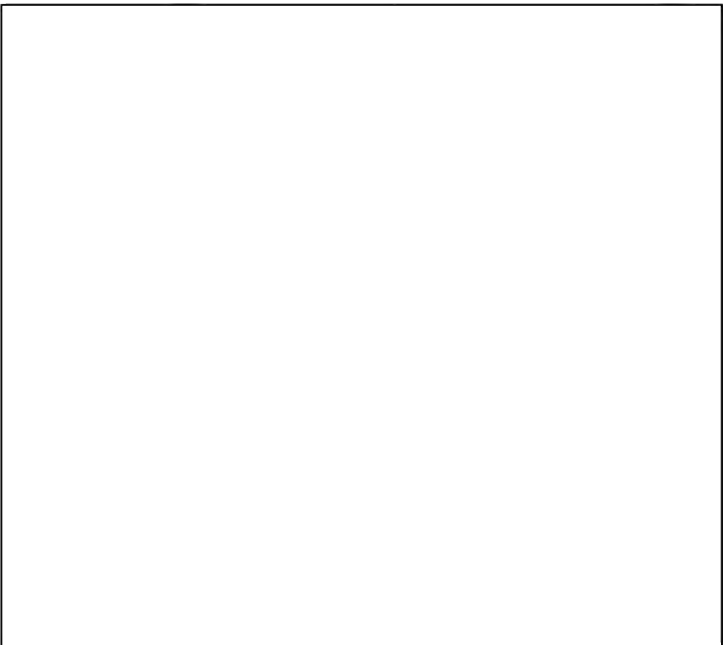
D. Let me simply say in closing: The OXCART is the best reconnaissance system we have. China is a target of the highest priority. To use less than the best now in observing this restless potential enemy would be incautious. To use less than the best would not be commensurate with the existing degree of our national involvement and risk in Vietnam.

~~TOP SECRET OXCART IDEALIST~~

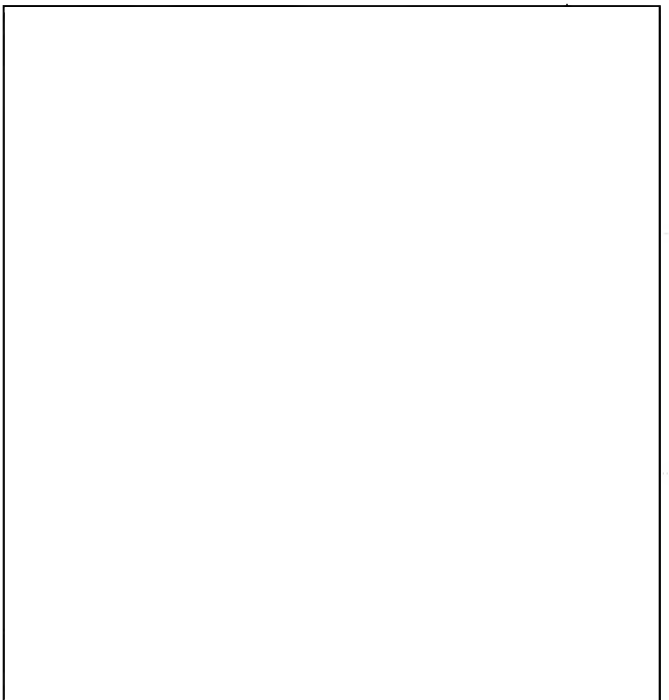


C. The primary concern of the Soviets would be to forestall the use of the aircraft over Soviet territory. They would probably support any Chinese Communist or North Vietnamese propaganda campaigns, but would certainly not make it the cause of a major crisis in US-Soviet relations.

D.



E.



F. In other countries around the world, there would be some sharp criticism if an aircraft were lost, but nothing approaching the outcry over the U-2 affair in 1960.

~~TOP SECRET OXCART IDEALIST~~

VIII. The OXCART aircraft is virtually invulnerable to enemy action, and it has the capability to react quickly to meet the few good weather openings--like the "bubble" effect--that we are going to have to depend upon if we are to continue our surveillance of the Chinese from June through September.

A. We believe, therefore, that the use of OXCART affords the best possibility of obtaining early warning on any Chinese Communist intervention in Southeast Asia.

IX. We have considered the probable reactions of other countries to the use of OXCART. The problem has been studied specifically by the United States Intelligence Board, and a Special National Intelligence Estimate has been published on this subject. A copy is available for your perusal.

A. In Summary, the estimate concludes that the Chinese Communists would not take any drastic new military action. They might think at first that the United States was seeking target intelligence to be used at an early date. We feel, however, that the Chinese Communists would soon come to regard this vehicle as merely another vehicle in the continuing United States collection program.

1. The Chinese would probably refrain from revealing the successful overflight of Chinese territory, as they have done in the case of successful U-2 flights. If an aircraft came down in China, however, there would be a major political and propaganda outcry.

B. We believe that the North Vietnamese also would show no significant reaction to the use of OXCART.

~~TOP SECRET OXCART IDEALIST~~